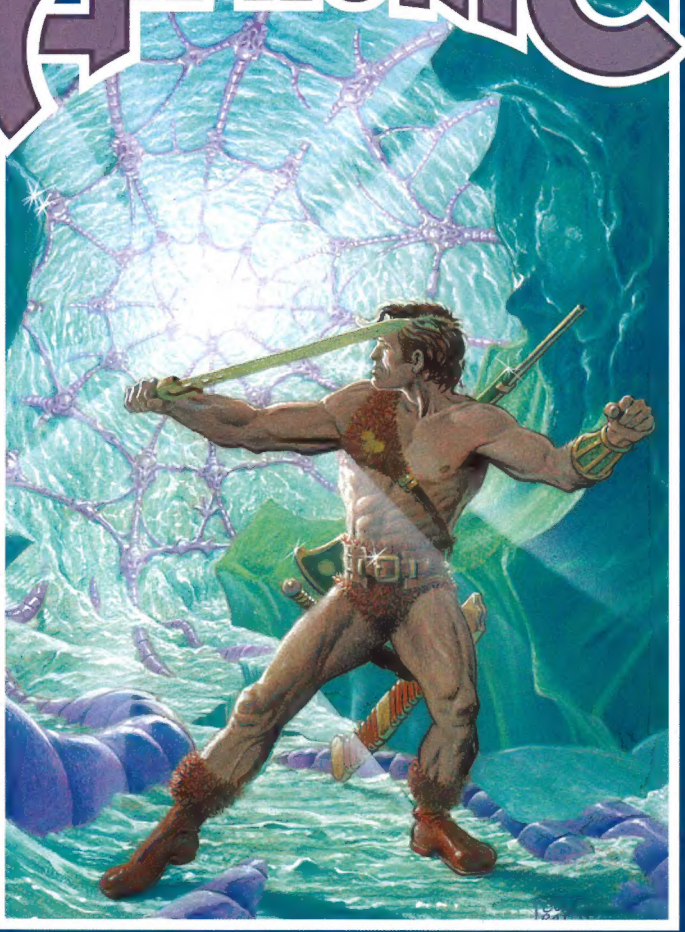
DARK HORSE COMICS

ROBERT E. HOWARD'S

IRONHAND OF ALMURIC™

4 OF 4

$2.00 U.S.,
$2.50 CANADA



ROY THOMAS AND MARK WINCHELL

IRONHAND OF ALMURIC™

based on characters created by
Robert E. Howard

script by
Roy Thomas

pencils by
Mark Winchell

inks by
David Cooper

lettering by
Jean Simek

technical advisor
Glenn Lord
cover by
Tim Conrad
editor
Randy Stradley

Publisher • Mike Richardson
V. P. Operations • Neil Hankerson
Executive Editor • Randy Stradley
Managing Editor • Barbara Kesel
Marketing Director • Bob Schreck
Controller • Brad Horn
Production Director • Cece Cutsforth
Production Manager • Chris Chalenor
DTP Manager • Sean Tierney
Editorial • Anina Bennett, Jerry Prosser, Diana Schutz, Chris Warner
Production • Steven Birch, Cary Grazzini, Ray Gruen, Carolyn Megyesi, Greg Pearson, Jack Pollock, Steve Posey, Monty Sheldon
Marketing Assistant • Kris Young
Operations • Debbie Byrd, Chris Creviston, Tiffany Schlobohm

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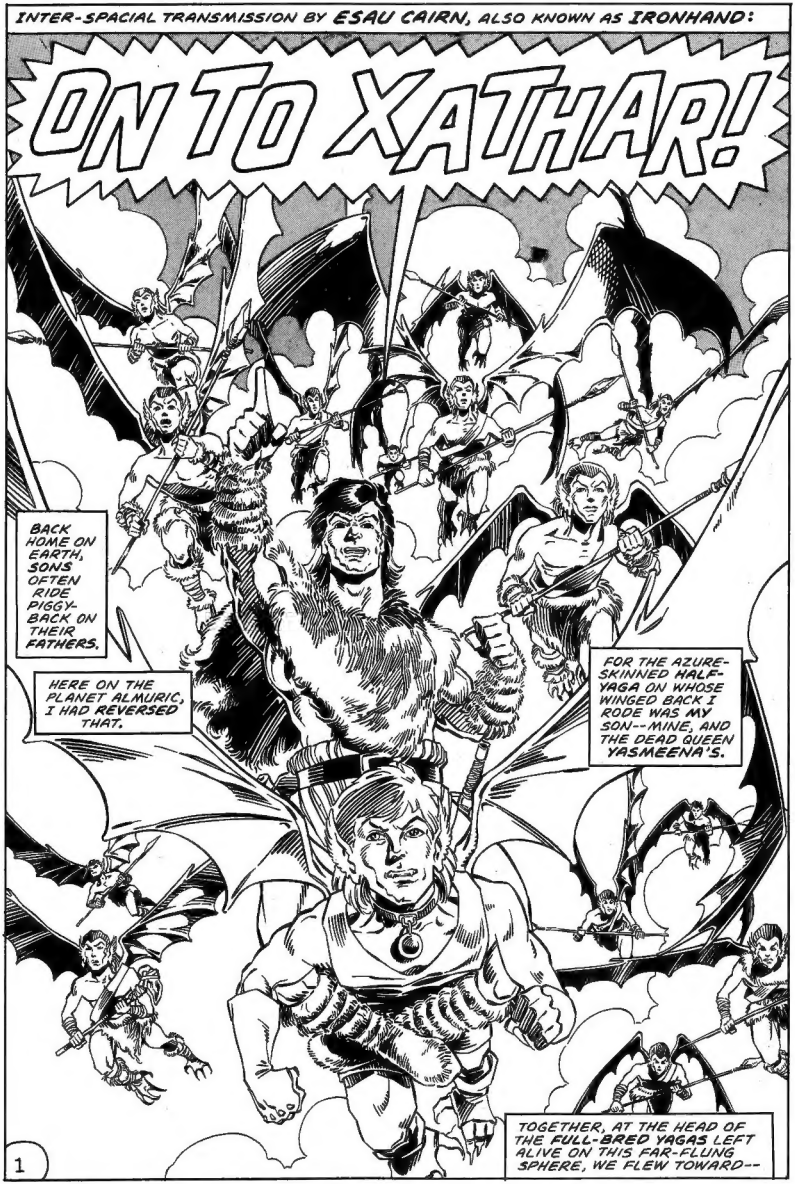
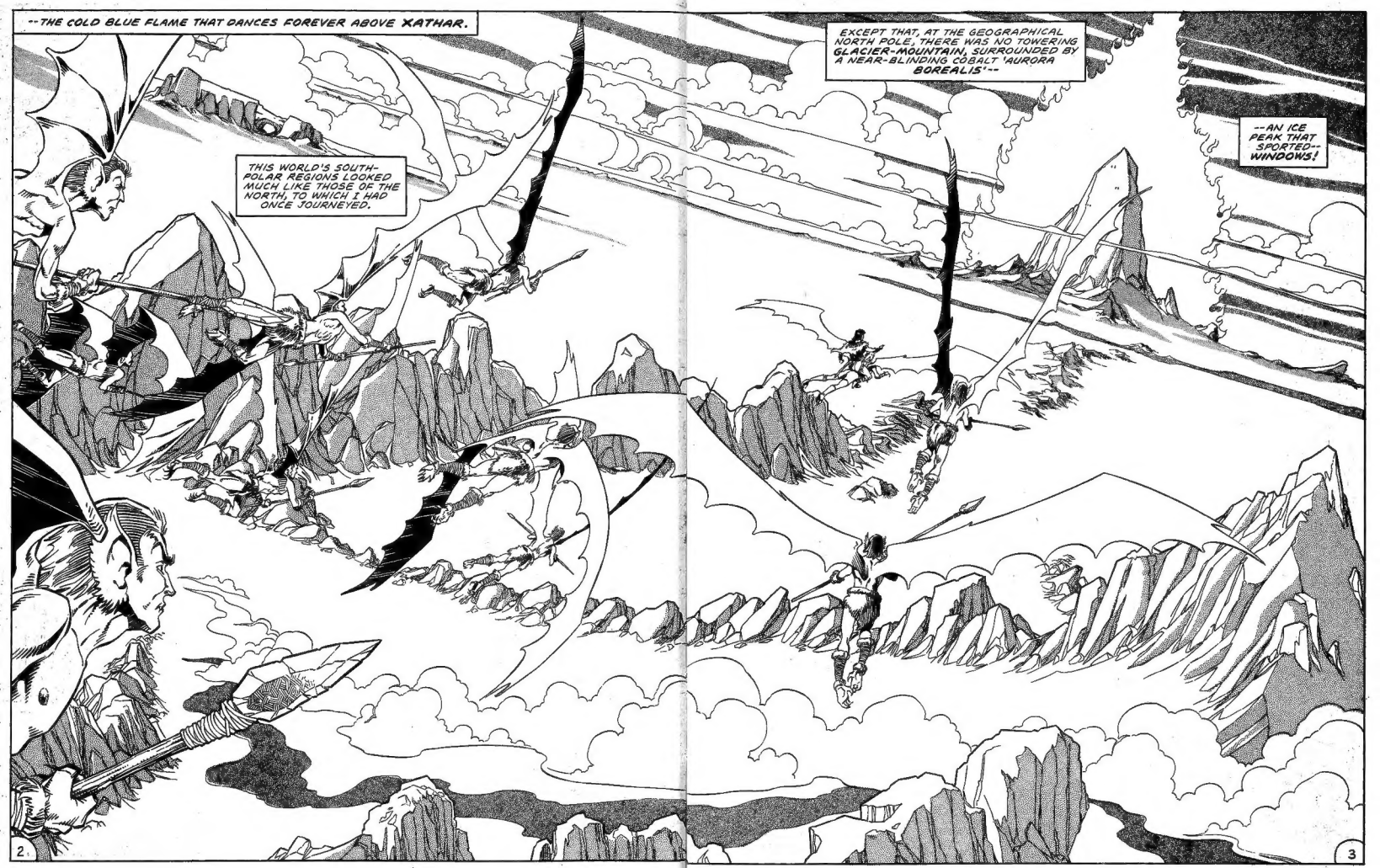

INTER-SPACIAL TRANSMISSION BY ESAU CAIRN, ALSO KNOWN AS IRONHAND:
ON TO XATHAR!
BACK HOME ON EARTH, SONS OFTEN RIDE PIGGY-BACK ON THEIR FATHERS.
HERE ON THE PLANET ALMURIC, I HAD REVERSED THAT.
FOR THE AZURE-SKINNED HALF-YAGA ON WHOSE WINGED BACK I RODE WAS MY SON--MINE, AND THE DEAD QUEEN YASMEENA'S.
TOGETHER, AT THE HEAD OF THE FULL-BRED YAGAS LEFT ALIVE ON THIS FAR-FLUNG SPHERE, WE FLEW TOWARD--
1


--THE COLD BLUE FLAME THAT DANCES FOREVER ABOVE XATHAR.
THIS WORLD'S SOUTH-POLAR REGIONS LOOKED MUCH LIKE THOSE OF THE NORTH, TO WHICH I HAD ONCE JOURNEYED.
EXCEPT THAT, AT THE GEOGRAPHICAL NORTH POLE, THERE WAS NO TOWERING GLACIER-MOUNTAIN, SURROUNDED BY A NEAR-BLINDING COBALT 'AURORA BOREALIS'---
--AN ICE PEAK THAT SPORTED-- WINDOWS!
2
3

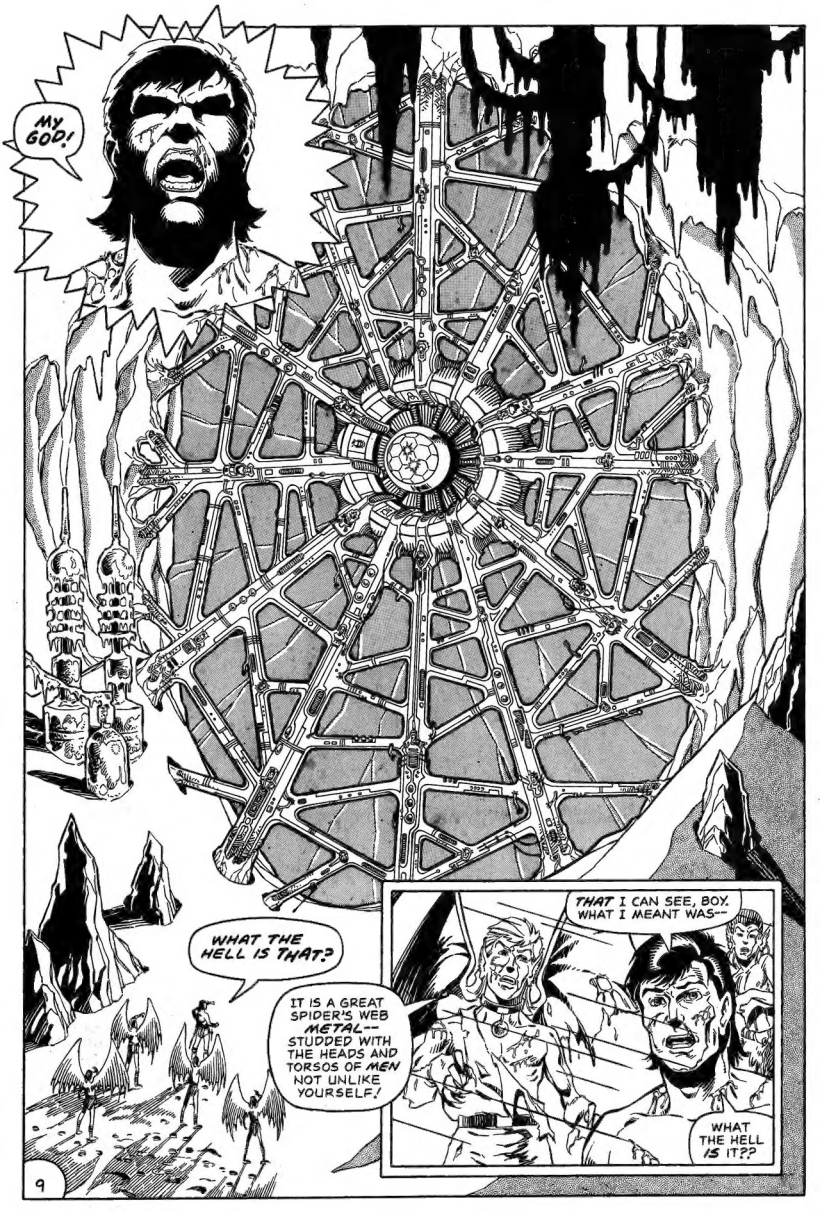
THIS, THEN, WAS UNDOUBTEDLY--
THE LAIR OF THE ANCIENTS--
--THE MYSTERIOUS RACE THAT ONCE RULED ALMURIC, AND EVIDENTLY HAD ME BROUGHT HERE, FOR REASONS I INTEND TO FIND OUT!
WHO ARE THEY--OR WERE THEY?
QUEEN YASMEENA--MY MOTHER--TOLD ME BUT LITTLE ABOUT THEM, EXCEPT THAT THEY ALL DIED, LONG AGO.
BUT SHE ALSO TOLD YOU THAT I WAS MERELY AN ENEMY, NOT YOUR FATHER--
--SO HOW MUCH WAS HER WORD REALLY WORTH?
ANYWAY, SHE TOLD ME THAT THE SO-CALLED "ANCIENTS" REARED THE GREAT CITIES OF MARBLE WHOSE RUINS NOW AFFRIGHT THE MOON...
...AND THAT THE YAGAS RULED THE ANCIENTS, IN THE DAYS BEFORE MY FORMER GURA SUBJECTS EVOLVED FROM THE APE.
INTERESTING THAT SHE SPOKE OF "EVOLUTION"--
INTERESTING TO ME, ANYWAY, THOUGH MAYBE NOT TO YOU.
STRANGE. I REALIZED FROM THE FIRST THAT YOU WERE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER YAGAS--MORE HUMAN, SOMEHOW.
STILL, I NEVER DREAMED THAT YAGAS WERE HATCHED NEARLY ADULT--THEN HARDLY AGE UNTIL THE DAY THEY DIE.
IF YOU LIVE EVEN HALF A NORMAL YAGA'S LIFESPAN, BOY, YOU'RE LIABLE TO OUTLIVE ME BY A HUNDRED YEARS OR MORE!
AND I DO INTEND TO OUTLIVE YOU, IRONHAND...
...BUT NOT JUST BECAUSE I AM, PART-YAGA!
AND WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
4

THE OTHER YAGAS ARE BONDED TO YOU, BECAUSE YOU WERE THE FIRST THING THEY BEHELD UPON EMERGING FROM THEIR EGGS.
AND I HAVE BROUGHT YOU TO THE ANCIENTS, OUT OF SOME SENSE OF FILIAL DUTY.
BUT THEN, I WILL LEAD THE YAGAS AWAY FROM YOU, IF I CAN.
AFTER THIS DAY I WILL TRY TO LEAD THE YAGAS IN THE WAYS OF PEACE--
BECAUSE OF YOU, I HAD TO KILL QUEEN YASMEENA--MY MOTHER!
--BUT I SHALL NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN!
WHAT!?
AND MAYBE YOU'D KEEP YOUR WORD--BUT SOONER OR LATER, SOMEONE ELSE WOULD RULE THE YAGAS--
--SOMEONE WHO'D TRY TO RE-ESTABLISH THE OLD DOMINANCE.
SORRY, BUT I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO TAKE THE YAGAS AWAY FROM ME--NOT EVER!
WE'LL CRASH INTO THE ICE--!
SON! WATCH OUT!
LOSING ALTITUDE FAST!
NO, IRONHAND.
5

I SIMPLY WISHED TO SHOW YOU--
--THAT YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF ALL DESTINIES ON ALMURIC--
--NOT EVEN YOUR OWN!
ALL RIGHT--SO YOUR WINGS ARE STRONGER THAN THOSE OF OTHER YAGAS!
YOU STILL COULD'VE GOTTEN US BOTH KILLED!
I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO HASH THIS OUT LATER, SON...
HEY--WHAT'S YOUR NAME, ANYWAY?
WE YAGAS HAVE NO NAMES--EXCEPT FOR OUR QUEENS!
BUT ONCE WE LEARN THE SECRET OF THE ANCIENTS, THE OTHER YAGAS MAY CHOOSE TO CALL ME "IRONWING"--
--THE YAGA WHO SLEW ESAU IRONHAND!

I DIDN'T ANSWER.
I FIGURED I'D WORRY ABOUT MY HOT-HEADED SON LATER.
RIGHT NOW, WE HAD A FORTRESS OF ICE TO STORM.
LET'S GO!
AS WE APPROACHED THE LOFTY ICE CAVES WHICH WERE THE ONLY ENTRANCES INTO THE CITADEL, THAT FRIGID BLUE FIRE SUDDENLY DANCED BRIGHTER--STRONGER--HIGHER!
WATCH OUT! SOMEONE--OR SOMETHING--KNOWS WE'RE HERE--
--AND THEY DON'T MUCH LIKE THE IDEA!
THEN WE HIT THE FLAME-BARRIER.
7

BEHIND US, MOST OF THE TRUE YAGAS WERE LITERALLY TORN TO BITS BY FIERCE BLAZE...
...AND I CAN STILL FEEL THAT SEARING PAIN EVEN AS I RELATE IT.
WE LEFT TRAILS OF BLOOD, AS IF RUNNING A GAUNTLET LINED WITH RAZOR-BLADES OF LIGHT.
BUT, SOMEHOW, WE MADE IT THROUGH--
--BARELY.
S-SON...
ARE YOU...?
8

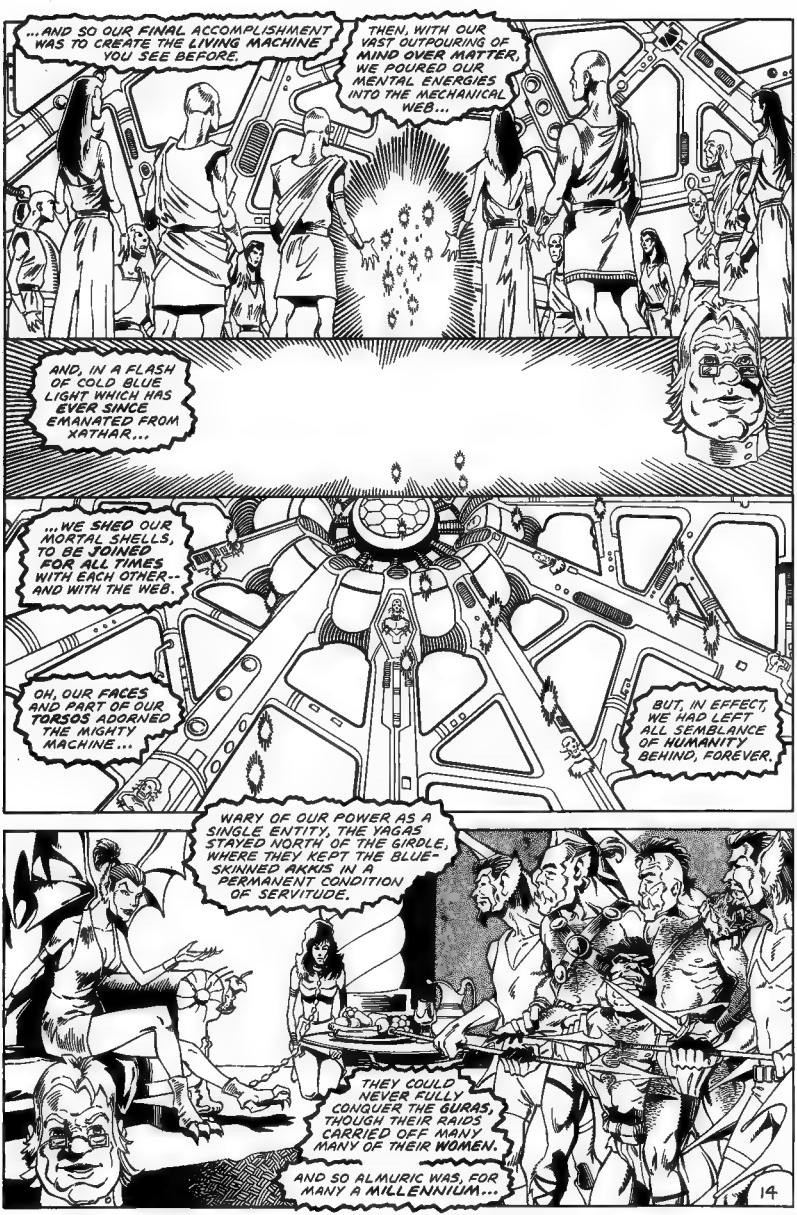

MY GOD!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
IT IS A GREAT SPIDER'S WEB *METAL*-- STUDDED WITH THE HEADS AND TORSOS OF *MEN* NOT UNLIKE YOURSELF.
THAT I CAN SEE, BOY. WHAT I MEANT WAS--
WHAT THE HELL *IS* IT??

SEEING THAT I WAS UNCERTAIN, ONE OF THE THREE WOUNDED YAGAS WHO'D MADE IT THROUGH SUDDENLY PANICKED--
--AND TRIED TO FLEE BACK THE WAY WE'D COME.
FRANKLY, RIGHT ABOUT THEN, I WAS IN THE MOOD TO LET HIM GO...
BUT SOMEBODY WASN'T.
YOU HAVE LED US ALL TO OUR DEATHS, IRONHAND.
THAT BEAM OF LIGHT FRIED HIM, LIKE A CHICKEN IN THE HEART OF DIXIE.
MAYBE-- AND MAY-BE NOT.
ANCIENTS-- OR WHO-EVER YOU ARE--SHOW YOURSELVES!
SO COMMANDS IRONHAND, WARLORD OF ALMURIC!
I THOUGHT PERHAPS A BIT OF BRAVADO MIGHT GET A REACTION.
IT DID.
"WARLORD OF ALMURIC"? AND WHO DO YOU SUPPOSE MADE YOU SO, ESAU CAIRN?
I WAS PROUD OF HIM--AND I SUSPECT IT SHOWED.
THEY KNEW MY REAL NAME, SO THEY WERE EXPECTING ME!
BEHIND ME, THE TWO SURVIVING YAGAS CRINGED... BUT MY SON NEVER FLINCHED.
NOBODY MADE ME ANYTHING--
--AND I'LL KILL THE MAN WHO SAYS DIFFERENT!

BUT WE ARE NOT PRECISELY "MEN."
SO--- YOU'RE WEARING PROF. HILDERBRAND'S FACE AGAIN!
BUT WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?
OR ARE YOU AFRAID TO TELL ME?
YOU NEED NOT GOAD ME, IRONHAND.
AFTER ALL, WHO HAS A BETTER RIGHT TO KNOW THE TRUTH BEFORE DYING THAN YOURSELF--
--YOU, WHO WERE THE GREATEST PAWN OF THE ANCIENTS?
EONS AGO, WE WERE WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL HUMAN BEINGS-- THOUGH OF A KIND SUCH AS ONLY THE MOST IDEALIZED STATUES OF YOUR OWN PLANET EVER REALIZED.
WE RULED ALMURIC WHILE THE GURAS ROSE PAINFULLY UP FROM THE HAIRY APE...
...AND KEPT THE GURAS, IN LATER DAYS, EASILY AT BAY.
WE HAD LIMITED POWERS OF MIND OVER MATTER, BY WHICH WE HAD REARED OUR GREAT MARBLE CITIES...
...THOUGH IT TOOK US PRECIOUS TIME TO SUFFICIENTLY CONCENTRATE OUR THOUGHTS.
EVENTUALLY, WE DECIDED TO EVOLVE A RACE TO ADMINISTER THE PLANET FOR US, SO WE COULD DEVOTE OURSELVES TO LOFTIER MATTERS.
AND SO, WITH A SCIENCE YOU WOULD THINK SORCERY, WE EVOLVED THE FIRST YAGA MALE AND FEMALE.
11

LIAR! YOU WILL NEVER GET ME TO BELIEVE YOU CREATED THE YAGAS!
QUEEN YASMEENA TOLD ME THAT WE YAGAS WERE ALWAYS MASTERS OF ALMURIC!
SHE TOLD ME THE SAME THING ONCE--BUT I'M STARTING TO THINK SHE LIED.
SHE DID NOT LIE, BUT SHE KNEW ONLY WHAT SHE LEARNED FROM HER ANCESTORS, AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE WAS QUITE LIMITED.
WE ANCIENTS WERE ALREADY FAR REMOVED FROM THE PROCESS CALLED "MATING"...
...BUT IT SERVED THE FIRST YAGAS WELL ENOUGH.
THEY PROPAGATED QUITE SUCCESSFULLY, AND SOON THE SKIES ABOVE OUR CITIES WERE FILLED WITH THEM.
AND WE WERE QUIETLY, SMUGLY, FOOLISHLY PROUD.
PERHAPS WE WERE TOO IMPERIOUS, OR PERHAPS IT WAS MERELY THEIR NATURE...
AND ONE DAY, WHEN AN ANCIENT ARROGANTLY GAVE AN ORDER TO A YAGA...
...THE WINGED ONE STRUCK OUT, IN ANGER.
UNTIL THIS MOMENT, THE YAGAS HAD THOUGHT OF US ALMOST AS GODS.
BUT WHEN THIS ONE SAW THAT HIS BLOW HAD ACTUALLY HURT ONE OF THE MASTER RACE...
...HE LASHED OUT WITH DEADLY EFFECT.

THEN, HEADY WITH THIS KILL, THE YAGAS TURNED ON THEIR FORMER RULERS.
THE ANCIENTS DEFENDED THEMSELVES WITH MENTAL BOLTS, AND THERE WERE MANY DEATHS ON BOTH SIDES.
SOON, HOWEVER, OUR RACE DROVE THE YAGAS INTO THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE...
...AND WE TURNED OUR MIND-OVER-MATTER POWERS TO ERECTING A ROCKY GIRDLE AROUND ALMURIC'S EQUATOR.
IT WOULD NOT KEEP THE YAGAS OUT, BUT IT SERVED NOTICE ON THEM THAT THEY CROSSED IT AT THEIR PERIL.
FEW DID, AND THE YAGAS CONTENTED THEMSELVES WITH HALF A WORLD.
THE GURAS THERE WERE TOO SAVAGE TO MAKE EASY CONQUESTS...
BUT THE YAGAS EASILY MADE SLAVES OF A BLUE-SKINNED RACE WHICH HAD BEEN ONE OF OUR EARLIER EXPERIMENTS.
IRONICALLY, WE HAD TURNED THEM LOOSE, AS BEING TOO DOCILE.
WE OURSELVES, OVER THE CENTURIES, WITHDREW INTO THE SOUTH-POLAR FASTNESS, AND THE ICY FORTRESS CALLED XATHAR WHICH WE ERECTED HERE.
INCREASINGLY, WE DESIRED TO RID OURSELVES OF OUR LIMITING PHYSICAL BODIES...


...AND SO OUR FINAL ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS TO CREATE THE LIVING MACHINE YOU SEE BEFORE.
THEN, WITH OUR VAST OUTPOURING OF MIND OVER MATTER, WE POURED OUR MENTAL ENERGIES INTO THE MECHANICAL WEB...
AND, IN A FLASH OF COLD BLUE LIGHT WHICH HAS EVER SINCE EMANATED FROM XATHAR...
...WE SHED OUR MORTAL SHELLS, TO BE JOINED FOR ALL TIMES WITH EACH OTHER-- AND WITH THE WEB.
OH, OUR FACES AND PART OF OUR TORSOS ADORNED THE MIGHTY MACHINE...
BUT, IN EFFECT, WE HAD LEFT ALL SEMBLANCE OF HUMANITY BEHIND, FOREVER.
WARY OF OUR POWER AS A SINGLE ENTITY, THE YAGAS STAYED NORTH OF THE GIRDLE, WHERE THEY KEPT THE BLUE-SKINNED AKKIS IN A PERMANENT CONDITION OF SERVITUDE.
THEY COULD NEVER FULLY CONQUER THE GURAS, THOUGH THEIR RAIDS CARRIED OFF MANY MANY OF THEIR WOMEN.
AND SO ALMURIC WAS, FOR MANY A MILLENNIUM...

...UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY.
THE YAGAS STILL REPRESENTED A POTENTIAL THREAT SO WE DECIDED WE NEEDED A CHAMPION-- FROM ANOTHER WORLD.
WE SENT OUR COMBINED MENTAL ESSENCE OUT THROUGH SPACE, SEEKING OTHER INHABITED PLANETS.
AND WE FOUND SOME, OF COURSE... THOUGH NOT YOURS FOR SOME TIME.
WE WOULD TAKE OVER SOME SENTIENT BEING AND GIVE HIM THE ABILITY TO HARNESS THE "GREAT SECRET" WHICH WOULD HURL BEINGS PHYSICALLY ACROSS THE ETHER.
THESE WOULD THEN SEND OTHERS OF THEIR SPECIES TO ALMURIC.
ALL THESE "CHAMPIONS" DIED, WHETHER AT THE HANDS OF GURA...
...OR YAGA.
NONE EVER LEARNED THE TRUE REASON WHY THEY HAD BEEN SENT TO ALMURIC.
WE WERE PATIENT.
WE HAD TO BE.
OUR CHAMPION HAD TO PROVE HE WAS A SUPREME WARRIOR, OR HE WAS NO GOOD TO US.
THEN, ONLY TWO MILLENNIA AGO, WE DISCOVERED YOUR "EARTH."
BUT ALL ITS "CHAMPIONS" FAILED US, TOO.
AND SINCE IT TOOK CENTURIES FOR US TO HUSBAND SUFFICIENT POWER TO DO A SENDING, WE WERE AT LONG LAST ON THE VERGE OF DESPAIRING...

...UNTIL WE HAPPENED UPON YOU.
BUT--YOU COULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN TO STUMBLE ONTO HILDEBRAND ONE NIGHT, WHILE RUNNING FROM THE POLICE!
WE WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN OUR ADVANCED THOUGHT PROCESSES TO YOU, ESAU CAIRN.
SUFFICE IT TO SAY: IN YOUR ERA, WE COMMANDEERED THE MIND OF A RETARDED DERELICT--WHAT YOUR DAY CALLED A "HOBO"--
--AND TURNED HIM INTO THE BRILLIANT PROFESSOR HILDEBRAND...
HE THEN SENT YOU ACROSS SPACE TO ALMURIC...
...WHERE YOU PROVED YOUR METTLE BY RISING TO RULE THE GURAS...
...AND CONQUERING THE YAGAS FOR US.
GIVEN YOUR NATURE, YOU COULD DO NO LESS IF YOU SURVIVED AT ALL.
FEELING THE THREAT FROM THE YAGAS ENDED, WE WERE CONTENT TO LET YOU HOLD SWAY OVER THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE.
BUT WHEN WE LEARNED OF LATE THAT QUEEN YASMEENA LIVED AND MEANT TO BREED A NEW GENERATION OF YAGAS...
WE DID NOT WANT YOUR GURAS COMING SOUTH WITH YOU, SO WE SMASHED THEM.
...WE LURED YOU TO THE GIRDLE.
BUT YOU, WE HOPED, WOULD SURVIVE TO CHALLENGE THE YAGAS--AND HOPEFULLY SLAY EACH OTHER!

BUT, ALAS, YOU DID NOT.
YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING ALL ENDS AGAINST THE MIDDLE--SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME!
BY GOD--YOU'RE EVEN WORSE THAN YASMEENA WAS!
YET, PERHAPS WE SHOULD THANK YOU, AFTER ALL--FOR IN BRINGING THESE FEW PITIFUL YAGAS HERE--
--YOU HAVE ENABLED US TO DESTROY THEM, SO THEY CAN NEVER RISE TO MENACE US AGAIN!
AAAH
AAH
IT--THEY KILLED HIM, JUST BY WILLING IT!
HEY--HOLD IT!
YOU WON'T DO ANY BETTER THAN--
GGGKK
BOTH OF THEM--DEAD!
ONCE AGAIN, THERE ARE NO TRUE YAGAS ON ALMURIC!
CLEAR OUT OF HERE, BOY--AND KEEP FLYING NORTH!
I'M GOING AFTER THAT THING--
--AND THERE'S NO POINT IN BOTH OF US DYING HERE!
17

ACTUALLY, ESAU CAIRN--THAT IS PRECISELY THE POINT!
ARRRGHH--!
THE PAIN WAS LIKE A THOUSAND DAGGERS, SLICING A THOUSAND NERVES...
BUT I WAS ESAU CAIRN, CALLED IRONHAND!
IF I HAD TO--
--I WOULD KILL THE ANCIENTS' MYRIAD PARTS ONE AT A TIME!
AND THAT'S JUST WHAT I PROCEEDED TO DO--
--SCALING THAT GREAT METALLIC WEB LIKE A FLY WHO REFUSED TO GET STUCK!
SOME OF THE MAN-PARTS SCREAMED SILENTLY--
--IN A WAY THAT NEARLY SPLIT MY HEAD OPEN.
YET, THERE WERE SO MANY OF THEM, I KNEW AT ONCE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT THE ANCIENTS--
--WAS TO HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THEIR CENTER!

THEY WERE JUST AS DETERMINED THAT I WASN'T GOING TO MAKE IT--
UNNNH
IRONHAND...
--AND LACED MY BODY WITH MENTAL RAYS THAT MADE THEIR FIRST ATTACK LOOK LIKE THEY'D PELTED ME WITH FEATHERS!
THE THOUGHTS WERE STILL BOMBARDING ME WHEN I REACHED THE CENTER...
BUT I COULD FEEL AN UNDERCURRENT TO THEM NOW...
AN UNDERCURRENT OF FEAR.
FEAR THAT I MIGHT JUST SUCCEED.
AND IF FEAR CAN MAKE ONE MAN MOMENTARILY STRONGER--
--WHAT CAN IT DO TO A MULTITUDE OF SOMEONES?
I WAS SO CLOSE TO DISLODGING THE CENTERPIECE OF THE WHOLE DAMN THING, I COULD SMELL IT...
B-BOY!
I TOLD YOU BEFORE-- TO RUN!
BUT IT FOUGHT BACK-- WITH ALL THE FURY OF THE BEAST, AND FAR MORE INTELLECT.
BUT NOW I THINK-- WITH YOUR HELP--
--I CAN BRING THE WHOLE SHEBANG-- CRASHING DOWN!

NO!
IF I PERISH--THE YAGAS WILL BE A DEAD RACE--FOREVER--
I--I MUST SAVE MYSELF--FOR THE SAKE OF THE YAGAS!
ALL RIGHT, THEN--GET OUT!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THIS BY MYSELF, OR ELSE I'LL--
YYYAAAA
MY INSTANT'S DISTRACTION HAD GIVEN THE ANCIENTS THEIR CHANCE.
I SWAYED FOR A LONG MOMENT--HOLDING ON TO THE GREAT MACHINE'S HEART FOR MY VERY LIFE--
FATHER!
I AM COMING, FATHER!

THE ANCIENTS' MENTAL BOLT STRUCK HIM EVEN AS HE SWOOPED TOWARD ME.
HIS WINGS WERE SHREDDED, LIKE A PAPER LANTERN IN A TORNADO--
-- BUT THEY HAD DONE THEIR WORK.
GRAB THE CENTER AS I HAVE, BOY-- AND PULL WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!
EVEN IF WE RIP IT FREE--ARE WE CERTAIN THAT WILL DESTROY THE HELLISH ENTITY?
NO...
...BUT HAVE YOU GOT A BETTER IDEA?
WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, HE GRASPED THE MANY-FACETED CRYSTAL-- IF THAT'S WHAT IT REALLY WAS--
-- AND WE PULLED TOGETHER.
HIS PAIN MUST HAVE BEEN AT LEAST AS GREAT AS MINE--
--YET HE BORE IT LIKE A MAN.
LIKE-- MY SON.
21

THEN--THE CRYSTAL TORE APART!
AND THE MACHINE BEGAN TO--BLEED.
WITHOUT ITS CENTER, MACHINE AND FLESH WERE SOMEHOW NO LONGER ONE.
THEY BEGAN TO PULL THEMSELVES APART HORRIBLY--
--EVEN AS THE TWO OF US FELL HEAVILY TO THE FLOOR.
COME ON, BOY--
WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE WHOLE PLACE--
MY TIMING, AT LEAST THIS ONCE, WAS PERFECT.

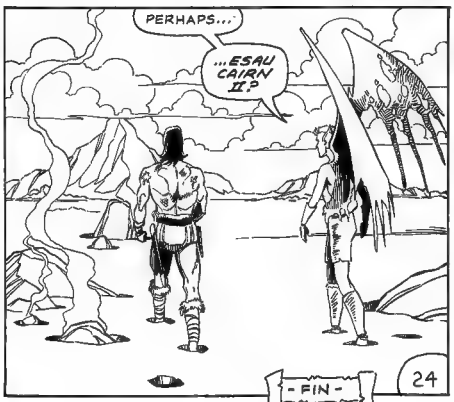
THE EXPLOSION LIFTED US AS IF WE WERE RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY--
--AND PLUNGED US DEEP INTO THE SUB-ARCTIC SNOW--
--JUST AS THE CITADEL BLEW!
BOY--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YES, I--THINK SO.
BUT--XATHAR--?
23

GONE.

AND THE ANCIENTS *WITH* IT, THANK THE GODS!
WHAT NOW, IRONHAND?
NOW? I HEAD BACK TO *WYNNEA'S CITY*-- TO RAISE AN ARMY THAT WILL FOLLOW ME BACK ACROSS THE *GIRDLE*, AND RETAKE MY *KOTH*.
BUT-- IF YOU STILL INSIST ON *FIGHTING* ME TO THE DEATH FIRST--
WELL, I CAN'T SAY I'M *EAGER*-- BUT I GUESS I'M *READY*.

I WAS A FOOL TO FIGHT YOU *FATHER*--
I SAW THAT CLEARLY-- IN THE MOMENT YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE FOR A PLANET WHICH DID NOT SEE YOUR BIRTH.
THERE WILL BE NO FIGHT.

GLAD TO HEAR IT.
I'LL BE *HONORED* TO BATTLE ALONGSIDE YOU, SON...
TOGETHER, WE'LL RAISE ALMURIC TO TRUE *GREATNESS*-- WITHOUT THE *ANCIENTS* PULLING THE STRINGS, THIS TIME.
YOU KNOW, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE YOU A *NAME*.
THINK OF ANY YOU *LIKE*?


PERHAPS...
...*ESAU CAIRN II*?
- FIN -

Flogging a Dead Horse

1991 was Dark Horse's best year since we began publishing in 1986. Overall sales were very up and our high-visibility projects such as ***Terminator: One Shot*** and ***Give Me Liberty*** contributed to a significant increase in consumer awareness of our company. Both titles sold millions of units in the direct sales market. This year also marked the beginning of several very important licensing relationships that lend great promise for Dark Horse's continued growth.

Our licensing agreement with the New Yorker of Lucasfilm Ltd. has already resulted in two phenomenally successful series (***Indiana Jones*** and ***Star Wars***) with 1992 promising continued success as we start episodes of ***The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*** ABC TV show. In 1991 we also began our relationship with Lucas Entertainment and are developing our own really funny television series, Dark Horse Entertainment, out of the Twentieth Century Fox lot. The addition of even greater flexibility and faster service in securing Rights motion picture licenses, and of the same over-the-Dark Horse in the direction of a licensing partners or its own film projects. Another 1991 milestone was our participation in Japan's ***2112*** Title. Most of the issues of our creative key relationship, which will continue to generate the month Dark Horse preserves its new monthly color series titled ***Jean Pierre's Real Mail***.

In 1992 we plan to continue producing the best comics possible. Additionally more new readers of our products. We continue our commitment to producing the best possible comics entertainment, but what this already is the continued growth of our line in terms of both quality and quantity (with the emphasis on quality). This month alone has several great books on the shelf, including ***Primal: From the Jungle to the Street*** by Dave Kraner, John Ridgeway, Dan Chichester, and John Van Fleet, all new licensing material in ***Cheval Noir #26***, and a voluminous journey into the twisted mind with Alexander Brunas and M Dalton Alford in story present ***Tales of Ordinary Madness***.

We will continue to acquire more creator-owned projects by hot newcomers and established pros, as well as new high-visibility licensing agreements. The much-anticipated ***Terminator: Versus Aliens*** written by Frank Miller and illustrated by Walt Simonson is only one of several projects that we have in store for the coming year.

Above all, what we have valued most in the past twelve months has been Dark Horse's outstanding relationships with its many fine creative talents whose efforts we all feel the pleasure of publishing, and the special trust that has been established between Dark Horse and our new supporters and friends. 1991 was a hell of a year, but 1992 promises to be a fifth Anniversary!

As you can tell from reading this, we're working hard to bring you the very best in 1992 and we're looking forward to many more years of growth and creativity on the road to our tenth Anniversary celebration in 1996!

Just drop in to

Mike Richardson

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CHECKLIST

SHIPPING JANUARY 7
Aliens Genocide #3
Dark Horse Presents #56
Venus Wars #10
Next Men #1
Terminator Enemy Within #3

SHIPPING JANUARY 14
Cheval Noir #26
Predator: Bloody Sands of Time #1
Primal
Give Me Liberty

SHIPPING JANUARY 21
Tales of Ordinary Madnees #1
Aliens Genocide #4
Compleat Aliens

SHIPPING JANUARY 28
Deadline #3
Insider #3
Terminator Enemy Within #4

DARK HORSE COMICS

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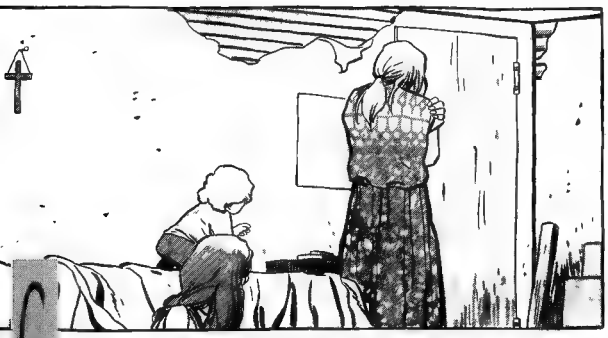

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SARAH BYAM

AND

TIM SALE.

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NOW.

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KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES...

DARK HORSE COMICS

AN ALL-NEW TWO-ISSUE SERIES BY SCREENWRITER CHUCK PFARRER AND ARTIST JOHN HIGGINS. ON SALE IN NOVEMBER.

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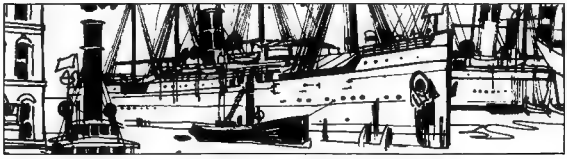
Cheval Noir #24

FRANCE



AMERICA

ENGLAND

JAPAN

AND WHEREVER IT IS THAT
DAVID LYNCH RESIDES...

DARK HORSE COMICS

Now's as good a time as any to jump in!

A monthly black-and-white anthology showcasing some of the finest talents from around the world!

On sale in November.

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INSANE ENOUGH TO TRY AND SAVE THE WORLD.

EDDY™ CURRENT

DARK·HORSE·COMICS

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Dark Horse Comics presents Ted McKeever's critically-acclaimed series in a super-deluxe laminated hardcover format. This 360 page, black-and-white volume also features previously unpublished art and an all-new cover illustration. McKeever's Metropol series (now in release from Marvel's Epic Comics) features several prominent characters who originated in the pages of *Eddy Current* collected in this volume.

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THE GREATEST SAGA OF ALL TIME CONTINUES... WRITER TOM VEITCH AND ILLUSTRATOR CAM KENNEDY PRESENT A SIX-ISSUE BI-MONTHLY SERIES COMING FROM DARK HORSE COMICS THIS DECEMBER...

STAR WARS

DARK EMPIRE

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Collect certificates from the first six issues for John Byrne's Next Men trading card set!
Super contest, too! Details in the first issue of this exciting monthly series.
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DARK HORSE COMICS

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR

THE BATTLE CONTINUES IN THE PAGES OF THE ALL-NEW DARK HORSE INSIDER!

DARK HORSE COMICS

This December be on the lookout for our newly-formatted Insider. It'll still give you the dirt on all the current comics from Dark Horse, but now in a 32-page black-and-white comic book format. Get the latest news on future projects and enjoy the new 16-page sneak preview section which gives you an advance look at some really beautiful artwork from upcoming Dark Horse projects. Also, Randy Stradley and Chris Warner continue the story of Machiko as she and a squadron of Predators go bug-hunting in a new Aliens Vs. Predator story running each and every month – Only in the Dark Horse Insider! Plus: Neat contests for retailers and readers alike, where you could win some really amazing stuff! Plus, plus: A spiffy, four-color cover on each and every issue! Hound your local retailer to get you your copy today!

THE ALL-NEW INSIDER! STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH!

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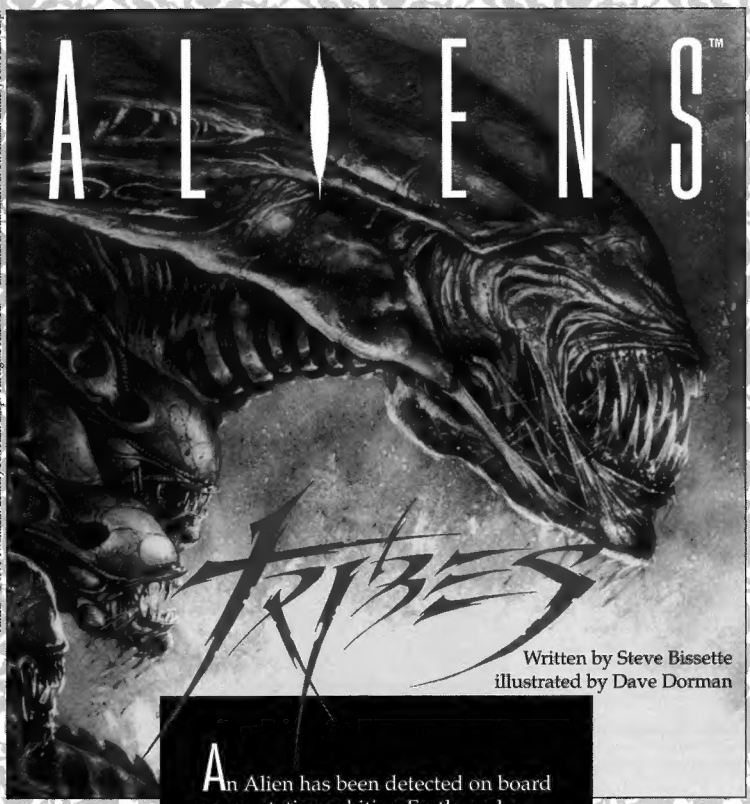


Written by Steve Bissette
illustrated by Dave Dorman

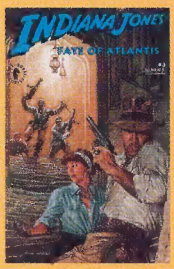
An Alien has been detected on board a space station orbiting Earth, and a crack extermination team sets out to destroy it. The success of their mission may be jeopardized by one man's sinister secret. Written by today's master of horror comics, Steve Bissette, accompanied by 24 full-color paintings by the most sought-after painter in the field, Dave Dorman, and presented in a 64-page, deluxe hardcover format with a Smythe-sewn binding and full-color dust jacket, Aliens: Tribes is a truly stunning book.

DARK HORSE COMICS

See the World! Explore its Riches!

(Maybe even get into a good barroom brawl!)

All courtesy of **INDIANA JONES™** *and Dark Horse Comics.*



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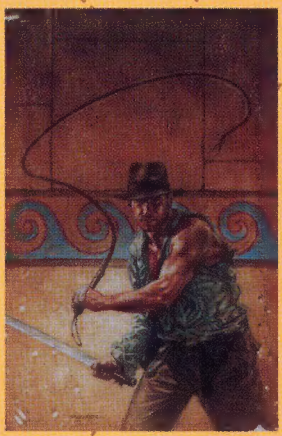

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